

**Friendship Heights Transportation Management District  
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2010**

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**Voting Members Present**

William P. Farley	Town of Somerset
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Christine Norris	Wisconsin Place
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
David Torchinsky	Law Offices of Binstock, Torchinsky and Associates

**Non-Voting Members Present**

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Christine McGrew	M-NCPPC

**TMD Staff Present**

Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

**Absent**

Marc Esposito	Bloomington's
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center

**Guests**

Joe Dixon	GEICO
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village

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**Abbreviations Used Herein Include:**

AVL = Automatic Vehicle Locator  
GPS = Global Positioning System  
CSS = Commuter Services Section

**Item 1, 2 – Introductions/Minutes review and approval:** November and December minutes were approved and seconded. [Absence of quorum at the December meeting]

**Item 3 – Chair's Comments:** Chair Robert Schwarzbart said he was sorry to report that Mallory Starr, who served with distinction as the representative of the Somerset House Management Association and as Vice-Chair of the Committee, has developed health problems that have compelled him to curtail his professional and civic activities. Accordingly, has had to resign from the Committee. Mr. Schwarzbart said he was certain that members will all remember Mr. Starr as a real gentleman who had an abiding interest in the Committee's work, and who capably substituted for Mr. Schwarzbart at last

year's budget presentation to the County Executive when **Mr. Schwarzbart** had a conflict. **Mr. Schwarzbart** thanked **Sande Brecher** for her "thoughtful letter of appreciation" to **Mr. Starr** (Item 3b in the meeting packet). **Mr. Schwarzbart** said he was able to convey like sentiments to **Mr. Starr** by phone over the weekend and will follow up with a letter on behalf of the Committee.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that with **Mr. Starr's** departure the Committee lost the use of the appealing Somerset conference room, since he had sponsored the Committee's presence. The Committee agreed to hold future meetings at the present meeting place, the County Recreation Center at Wisconsin Place. **Mr. Schwarzbart** sent best wishes to **Mr. Starr** and expressed the hope that he may be able to visit the Committee again one day soon.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that there were only four voting members at the December meeting with **Rep. Van Hollen** District Director **Joan Kleinman**, resulting in the absence of a quorum; this was a "major embarrassment" to the Committee. **Mr. Schwarzbart** stated that **Ms. Kleinman** was a "lovely, informative lady" who had arrived on time, had given much of herself and had remained throughout the entire meeting. She spoke about the status of federal funding for the area's transit systems, which was a particularly germane topic area of interest to the Committee. **Ms. Kleinman** also spoke about the issue of legally curtailing cell phone usage by auto drivers. Since such a large number of drivers are now doing this, **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted, the issue may be more successfully addressed at the federal level. **Mr. Schwarzbart** pointed out that **Ms. Kleinman**, on behalf of **Congressman Van Hollen**, had made it to the meeting when so many of the Committee members had not. He added that in too many instances, not including the January meeting, the Committee would barely make its quorum. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said that without an adequate number of people the Committee loses its representative status.

**Mr. Carlson** reiterated the County's attendance policy, which allows for three non-consecutive and two consecutive absences before a Committee position is considered vacated. **Mr. Carlson** said he would send out letters advising those members close to losing a seat due to attendance. Attendance rules apply to voting members; however, other non-voting members, such as police and community liaisons, are strongly encouraged to attend regular meetings to help the Committee have more of an impact. There was discussion about having Police Community Liaison, **Denise Gill**, attend future committee meetings. **Jim Carlson** said he will contact **Officer Gill**.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** welcomed new voting members **Marc Esposito** (Bloomingtondale's) and **David Torchinsky** (Law Offices of Binstock, Torchinsky and Associates) to the Committee.

**Mr. Carlson** explained that due to the County's budgetary constraints, Commuter Services Section (CSS) will no longer provide refreshments at the meetings. This may change when the County's budget rebounds. **Christine Norris** said she would provide refreshments expensed through Wisconsin Place.

**Item 4 – Election, Vice Chair:** **Leonard Grant** nominated **William Farley** for the position of Vice-Chair, replacing **Mallory Starr**. The nomination was seconded and the Committee voted unanimously in his favor.

**Item 5 – Budget Priorities List FY11:** **Mr. Schwarzbart** asked the committee to review and comment on the TMD FY11 Budget Priorities document and cover letter, to be presented at the January 28<sup>th</sup> meeting with the County Executive.

**Mr. McCloskey** asked that the cover letter provide a clearer explanation about the loss of surface parking referenced in the budget priorities attachment. He also said the linkage of the Super FareShare program to parking in the third paragraph could be reworded. **Mr. Carlson** agreed to make this section clearer.

**Mr. McCloskey's** asked about the duties of the Marketing Specialist in the TMD. **Sheila Wilson** provided a description of her responsibilities, among them: helping employers and employees get to work using alternative forms of transportation; conducting seminars, lobby events, relocation seminars at employer worksites; and promoting employer subsidy programs such as Super FareShare.

**David Glass** said he would vote to strike from the budget priorities document, "Providing adequate funding to operate the TRiPS store," stating that the County should close the store and look into a sublease arrangement for the space that would generate more revenue. **Mr. Glass** believes the main functions of the TRiPS commuter store can be served via the internet and that bus passes are available at other locations, such as the County operated liquor stores.

**Ms Brecher** reiterated the functions and purpose of the TRiPS store. She said the store and its lease requirements were a condition of development approval with Chevy Chase Land Company for the redevelopment of its site. The Friendship Heights community asked for a location that promotes alternative transportation resources. She said that many people want to talk to a real person when they have questions and, since schedule printing has been reduced due to budgetary restraints, the County has noted an increase in the number of complaints from customers. The TRiPS store was designed to promote alternative transportation and to be a resource to the community. In the future when the economy rebounds, the County will extend the mission of the store to include a partnership with the Montgomery County Visitors Bureau.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** stated that Friendship Heights has become a major transportation hub, so there is an even greater need in the community for the TRiPS store.

**Mr. McCloskey** suggested changing the order of the budget priorities to:

1. Improve All Bus Service
2. Enhance Pedestrian Safety
3. Promote Car Sharing
4. Provide Adequate Funding to Staff and Operate the TRiPS Commuter Store Located on Wisconsin Circle.
5. Promote Employee Use of Public Transportation by Providing Continued Funding of the Super Fare Share Program.

The Committee agreed to the re-ordering of the budget items.

**Ms. McGrew** added to **Ms. Brecher** comments about the TRiPS store lease, stating that as a Planning Department decision it is not easily undone. She advised that if items specifically included for community benefit, such as the TRiPS store, were removed from development then they could be lost for good.

The Committee voted to include the continued operation of the TRiPS Commuter Store in the budget priorities document (6 for - 1 against).

**David Torchinsky** proposed forming a subcommittee to examine the possibilities for promoting the TRiPS store on Facebook or other social media sites. **Ms. Brecher** said she would investigate to see if promotion can be done independently or as part of Montgomery County Facebook page. She asked for a Committee recommendation to facilitate exploration of social media. The Committee voted 6 in favor; 1 opposed.

**Mr. McCloskey** asked that budget document include having the State Highway Administration (SHA) move up their 2012 adjustment completion date to increase pedestrian traffic light timing on Wisconsin Avenue. **Mr. Carlson** said that would be included in the revision.

**Mr. Glass** suggested the Committee reword “Improve all bus service” to “Continuing to study methods to improve bus service within budgetary constraints.” **Mr. Glass** asked if the County bus system has global positioning system (GPS) equipment. **Ms. Brecher** said that the buses are equipped with an automatic vehicle locator (AVL) system that monitors buses, routing them around incidents and keeping them on schedule. The monitors also facilitate a system similar to Metro’s Next Bus system. **Ms. Brecher** said that a presentation on this subject could be arranged with Phil McLaughlin, Ride On’s Transit Planner.

In response to discussion about the GPS system cost, the Committee voted to retain language regarding using technology such as a GPS included in the first budget item, Improve All Bus Service (6 in favor; 1 opposed).

**Item 6 – Proposed Metrobus Changes, ‘N’ Line:** **Mr. McCloskey** announced that Metro is planning a restructuring of the N2, 4 & 6 buses, which run from Friendship Heights to Farragut Square. There will be a hearing on the changes on January 27, 2010; however, details on bus changes are not known. Some of the planned changes for Metrorail include starting service an hour later on weekends and 30 minutes on weekdays. **Mr. McCloskey** wanted to know the impact of these changes to the Friendship Heights Metro Station, and suggested if the changes have an impact then someone from the Committee be sent to the hearing.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** was concerned that if Metro closes early on weekends, which are generally celebratory hours, then this may discourage public transit usage.

In response to a question about Metro changes affecting GEICO, **Joe Dixon** said that most GEICO employee work hours begin during the hours of 7:30-8:30 am; however, maintenance staff may be affected by the changes. **Ms. Brecher** will get information on the proposed changes and report back to the Committee.

**Mr. McCloskey** announced the raising of parking rates on Wisconsin Avenue from Friendship Heights to Tenleytown. Also, enforcement hours are changed to include Saturday until 10 pm. In response to **Mr. McCloskey’s** question of possible additional parking in Friendship Heights, **Ms. Norris** said she would obtain parking information for Wisconsin Place, combined with existing Friendship Heights Village information.

**Tiffany Gee** said that the Chevy Chase Shopping Center parking is for patrons of the center and, in order to discourage parking from people not visiting the shopping center, a flat fee of \$25.00 is charged regardless of how long a car is parked.

**Item 9 – Commuter Service Updates:** **Ms. Brecher** announced that the second round of budget cuts for FY10 had been submitted to the County Council. The Super FareShare program, which had been saved in the first round of cuts, has now been suspended. The County is notifying employers in the program of the suspension. **Ms. Brecher** explained that the current budgetary constraints are such that all purchases now must be approved by the Division Chief. Even though the economy shows hopeful signs of an improving economy, there is a lag with County government.

**Mr. Torchinsky** asked how employers are supposed to pay for benefits with such short notice. **Ms. Brecher** said the employers can either pay for the full amount of benefits or they can reduce the amount of benefits ordered for their employees by paying only their portion. Employers may begin working

immediately with Metro to order SmartBenefits directly, or they may order with the County as they have been doing – however, the County cannot provide its matching contribution, so employers must pay full price.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting date: February 9, 2010

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